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Wilmot De Saussure  
 17 May 1894

There seems to be a singular fitness in the fact, that so many Huguenot descendants from various parts of the United States, should be assembled this evening in the Huguenot Church of New York, to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and to listen with thrilled interest to the eloquent words in which we have been told of the brave men and women, who became exiles from their beloved France, rather than give up the right to worship their God, according to the reformed doctrines, which they believed to be the true exposition of His Holy Scriptures.

We are not assembled to commemorate that Revocation, but rather to express our gratitude, that the silver lining of the dark cloud which two centuries ago overshadowed the exiles, has been turned to us, and we are now able to appreciate the blessings which have resulted from the then apparent chastening. Very deep was the gloom when the cruel Edict of Revocation was proclaimed, preceded as it had been by the bloody persecutions and dragonnades which foretold it. The children of Israel left Egypt laded with the spoils thrust upon them by their oppressors in their anxiety to be rid of a people for whose deliverance such dire plagues had been visited upon Pharaoh and his people. Not so with the Huguenot exiles. Thrust out of their country, yet visited with severest penalties for endeavoring to go: husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters torn apart from each other while endeavoring to comply with the sentence of banishment: despoiled of their property and goods: escaping by flight, as best they could: in penury: with physical sufferings, not a tithe of which has ever been told, or can ever be learned: the pious exiles, bearing their heavy crosses, sought refuge in foreign lands:

those who fled for homes to the new world, braving the hardships of the wilderness, and the ferocity of wild beasts and of savages not less ferocious than the beasts of the forests. Their simple, humble faith in Him whom they had learned to worship as Lord of Lords, and to serve as King of Kings, gave them strength to bear the crosses, hoping that He who had permitted such to be laid upon them, would in His own good time, replace the crosses with crowns. We are gathered, to express our gratitude to Him for the crowns.

Very abundant is our cause for such gratitude. The religious and political liberty enjoyed in this land: the protection given by the laws: the prosperity which in two centuries has converted the wilderness into a garden, a granary for the world: and the influence which the Huguenot exiles to America exercised in bringing about such religious and political liberties, framing its laws, developing the resources of the country, all speak for the character of those who preferred exile with its hardships, to an abandonment of their religious convictions. The descendants of the Huguenots, while deploring the injuries which resulted to the fair country of their forefathers from the ruthless persecutions and banishments, can now see how the dark cloud which overshadowed the exiles in their flight, had hidden in it a silver lining for the dissemination in other lands of the arts, sciences, education, faithful obedience to righteous civil laws, which the exiles carried with them: and for the industry, sobriety, integrity, and conscientious observance of religious duties, which characterized their forefathers into whatsoever lands they went; all of which impressed themselves upon all the peoples among whom they settled.

Dr. Baird in the Rise of the Huguenots, quotes Bishop Jewel, as saying of the Huguenots who in 1564 took refuge in England, "They are our Brethren, they live not idly. If they have houses of us, they pay rent for them. They hold not our grounds but by making due recompense. They beg not in our streets, nor crave anything at our hands, but to breathe our air, and to see our sun. They labor truly, they live sparefully. They are good examples of virtue, travail,

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faith and patience. The towns in which they abide are happy, for God doth follow them with his blessings."

Professor Tuttle, of Cornell University, in his History of Prussia, says of the Emigration to that country, "The repeal of the Edict of Nantes, and the expulsion of the Huguenots opened the way for French exiles, who came in large numbers, were liberally treated, and gave a powerful impulse to industry, above all in the finer mechanical arts. \* \* \* Besides the German scholars there was also at Berlin a large number of French Protestant refugees who were already distinguished in letters and science. Such were James Lenfant, who was a fierce enemy of the Jesuits, and wrote histories of the Church Councils; Isaac Beausobre, who is still known by his learned work on the Manichaens; Vignolles, who prepared a chronology of the Old Testament; and Lacroze, who made researches into the Coptic, and other obscure tongues. These were all men of fervent piety, and their Gallic wit, taste, and eloquence, agreeably seasoned the intellectual diet of Berlin Society. \* \* A circumstance which will strike the attention of any person who looks at the roll of the early members of the Academy, is the large number of French names. It was a number too, wholly out of proportion to the total strength of the French immigration. Exact data are of course not available. The refugees were dispersed throughout the Elector's dominions, and the movement itself continued for many years, but on any reasonable estimate, the ratio of scholars among the exiles must excite amazement. It proves that Protestantism in France, at least as represented by Protestants who fled from France to Prussia, was not a low delusion of the ignorant populace, or, on the other hand, a mere fancy of shallow and sceptical nobles, but an intelligent conviction on the part of some of the most erudite men of the age; men who joined learning to piety; and who, when banished from their country, carried the zeal of scholars, as well as the faith of Christians among the people who gave them an asylum. Some among the refugees, such especially as Lenfant and Beausobre, were pulpit orators, widely known for the fervor and elo-

quence of their sermons. The civil service and the army found employment for others. And even the artisans, who naturally formed the greater number in every French Colony, were not only among the best whom their own country had produced, but were also vastly superior in sobriety, in intelligence, in skill, in the range of their talents, to the workmen of Prussia. It is said that over forty new branches of industrial art were introduced by them."

Who can forget the influences exerted upon the Christian world by Farel, Beza, Calvin, and many others who could be named. The Zurich letters alone, containing the correspondence of Calvin with the English Divines of that day, shew the impress which he made upon the English Reformed Church. Throughout the world, wherever the Protestant Church is known, these Huguenot names take rank as peers of all who labored in the cause of a reformed Christianity.

If there were no other record of Beza left, but that grand Colloquy at Poissy, could any one fail to see the stamp which he made upon the religious convictions of every thinking people.

While the simple, yet sublime Liturgies of the Reformed Churches continue to be the media through which Protestants using a liturgical service, address their supplications to God, no one can fail to see the influence exerted by Farel, in framing a worship so beautiful, so humble, so consoling, so ennobling.

The Grand Monarch had driven into exile his Huguenot subjects: did he dream, how soon the Marshal de Schomberg, one of their number, would be one of the illustrious Generals under William of Orange, to vindicate by force of arms, against himself, the great interests of Protestantism, and finally force the author of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to terms of peace humbling to his pride, and disastrous to his kingdom.

That revocation deprived France of so large a part of its truly religious element, that little more than a century had passed, ere the streets of Paris which two centuries before had run red with blood of the massacre of St. Bartholomew,



again streamed with blood shed by citizens of that same city, who denying the existence of God, erected an idol, the Goddess of Reason, and as two centuries previously their forefathers had butchered Huguenots in the name of Faith, now again butchered thousands in the name of this idol, the symbol of all want of faith. We would vainly close our minds to the convictions of reason, did we not see in the horrors of those days of the French Revolution, how, in that country, the influence of the conservative, religious and faithful Huguenots was wanting and missed. Had that part of its population been retained, France would probably have achieved political liberty, without the infamies of such bloody sacrifices.

The study of the civil law, to this day, causes the Universities of Germany, to take rank among the first institutions of the continent of Europe. And the introduction of a knowledge of such law, is attributed to the Huguenot refugees in Prussia. Weiss, in his History of the French Protestant refugees, gives the names of many who were appointed by the Elector of Brandenburg, as Judges of Colonies, and adds, "The Judges of the Colonies, several of whom were able jurists, first introduced the principles of Roman Law, with which French Legislation is deeply imbued, into German practice. Thence came that tendency to civil equality, which shewed itself in Prussia very long before the French Revolution of 1789, and which prepared the brilliant part which was to be played by that Kingdom in modern times." A century and a third later than this emigration, a descendant of the Huguenots who fled to South Carolina, while representing the United States at the Court of Belgium, diligently pursued the study of such civil law, as he perceived its great importance. Returning to the United States, after serving a term in the House of Representatives, the Hon. Hugh S. Legaré was appointed Attorney-General of the United States, and by his able opinions, especially on great questions of International Law, manifested the very important influence exerted by the Huguenot refugees, in shaping the great Code of Laws under which

so large a part of the Continent of Europe, now administers justice.

In science, Desaguliers, descendant of an Huguenot exile, a pupil of Newton, vindicated the confidence placed in him by his illustrious teacher, and by his public lectures contributed greatly to the wider dissemination, and better understanding of the philosophy of his preceptor. And Denis Papin in 1767, worked out the problem of the adaptability of steam, to the ordinary purposes of life, inventing the steam engine, in fact.

It is a grand feature of the Hebrew people wherever scattered, that they so care for their indigent, that a Jew beggar is a rarity. The Huguenots sorely tried as they had been, and despoiled as they were of property, very early began associations for the relief of the more necessitous among themselves, and the Hospital for Poor French Protestants, in London, is a noble monument to their laudable desire to support and care for their own needy and distressed. The oldest charitable Society in Charleston, the South Carolina Society, owes its institution, for similar purposes, to the Huguenot refugees to that colony.

No one can study the development of the mechanical industries in England, Holland, Prussia, Ireland, and wherever else these refugees found shelter, without perceiving the marked influence and improvement which rapidly shewed itself. In woolens, silks, glasses, linens, and other branches too numerous to name, the inferior work of the several countries became converted into skilled labor. I will illustrate this thought, by one fact only. When the Huguenots first fled to England, the paper used in that Kingdom was of a coarse, brownish character, but under the teaching and manipulation of these refugees, English paper has long since become a synonym for excellence in that branch of manufacture.

Instances such as above alluded to are mentioned to shew the Huguenot influence in other lands than our own. We are here, however, to-night, for the more especial purpose, of considering the influences exerted by them in the United



States, and expressing our gratitude to Him who led them into the wilderness of the new world, for the character which, under His teachings, they brought with them, to impress itself upon the growing institutions and prosperity of this great country.

From the condition of things existing among the original settlers in the new world, we naturally cannot look for much of written material furnished by themselves from which to learn what was their earlier life in the Colonies. All, of whatever nationality or denomination, were too engrossed in the struggle for the preservation of life, to have time or opportunity to leave much of written history connected with themselves. We are consequently left to glean from public records, from tradition, from the accounts given by travellers visiting them for trade, or other purposes, or from brief and scattered memoranda to be found in old family Bibles, or fragments of letters, what were their privations and toils, and by what heroic exertions they finally triumphed over their difficulties, and laid deep the broad foundation on which our present liberties, privileges, civilization, and powerful influence upon the other peoples of the world, have arisen.

These settlers came to a land where there was no law, save such as they brought with them, and put into execution. Whether Cavalier or Puritan, Dutch or Swede, Scotch, Irish, Pallatine or Swiss, or other nationality, Walloon, Huguenot, Quaker, Presbyterian, Churchman, Baptist or other denomination, they were thrown together in greater or lesser degree to work out the problem of building up a code of laws, and institutions which should ultimately enure for the common benefit of all. With the differences of views, and prejudices which necessarily were brought over by such various settlers, there were, as was to be expected, many jars and contentions, before the contact and commingling could unite into a harmonious whole. Very far is it from my intention to intimate that the Huguenot element alone, produced the grand cosmopolitan people who now constitute the people of the United States, and by their very cosmopolitanism worked out the toleration, and religious and political liberties, which charac-

terize, at this day the institutions, and laws of the United States. But I do mean, distinctly to claim, that the characteristics of the Huguenot element, did contribute very materially to bring about such result.

W. R. Williams in his lectures on Baptist history, says, "So of the French Protestant body, how noble is the great record of the French Huguenots. How much did they suffer at home; and how blessed was the influence which they bore abroad to Prussia and Holland, to England and to Scotland, to Ireland and to our own North America. Not long since a Frenchman of science recorded his sense of the Divine nemesis, that among the soldiers who pressed the siege of Paris around the writer's place of study, so many were under the banners of Germany, serving against France as the children of Huguenot exiles that Louis XIV. had hounded and peeled, returning in God's mysterious arrangements to plague the land where their forefathers had been so cruelly treated."

It will be interesting to review very briefly, some of the characteristics of the Huguenot exiles to America. "In 1686 a small French colony organized itself at New Oxford. The same year a French church was founded at Boston, and ten years after received as pastor a refugee minister of France, named Daillè." At new Rochelle, one of the earliest acts of the immigrants was the erection of a church. "A small wooden building was first erected. The second Huguenot Church was built of stone. \* \* While they were building the church every one was anxious to contribute something to its progress. Females assisted, by carrying mortar in their aprons, and stones in their hands." That first wooden church was probably built before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In Charleston, South Carolina, the first colony was one of about ninety persons, sent out by Charles II. in 1680, arriving at that town in the early spring of the year, when as yet there was not a score of dwellings erected. This colony settled on the banks of the Cooper River in the vicinity of the new town. There is no positive evidence when they erected a church, but in 1681, a lot in the town

was granted, and on the margin of the grant, it is designated "french Church," although the grant was to an individual, since under the then laws of the Province, while seven persons could organize a congregation, yet the land must be held in trust. Every circumstance to be learned from contemporaneous records, seems to indicate, that a French Protestant Church was organized in Charlestown, in the early spring of 1681, and that the congregation worshipped on the spot now occupied by the Huguenot Church of Charleston, and have continued so to do from 1681 to the present day. When the larger immigration, after the revocation, took place, the more recent comers, most probably, found this congregation already organized, and a building already erected in which its worship was conducted. The new comers began to colonize, very speedily, from Charlestown, and almost immediately ensuing, we find three other congregations organized, one on the Eastern bank of the Cooper River, known as Orange Quarter, one on the Western bank, known as St. John's Berkley and one at James Town on the Santee River. In December, 1700, Lawson, travelling along the Santee, finds the pious Huguenots returning on Sunday, from their church, to be reached only by many miles of travel, along rough roads, through dense swamps, and across deep creeks, passed by the canoes or periaugers kept at these creeks for such purposes.

In this Huguenot Church of New York, successor of the original Pine Street Church, and on an occasion such as the present, we can almost fancy we hear the tramp of the new Rochellers coming along the road, as they journey to commune in that venerated Church of their Fathers, and we listen with rapt attention for the 60th Psalm of Beza and Marot, with which they accompanied their march. We can almost see their wagons encamped around the walls of the church, with parents and children, young and old, awaiting the rising sun, to commence their humble prayers, and return their grateful thanks at being able to assemble for the worship of God according to their simple ritual, without fear, or contradiction.

And while listening to the march of the new Rochellers, there comes to our ears, the echo from the far off Church in Charlestown, "whither the Huguenots on every Lord's Day gathered from their plantations of the Cooper, and taking advantage of the ebb, and flow of the tide, they might all be regularly seen, the parents with their children whom no bigot could now wrest from them, making their way in light skiffs, through scenes so tranquil, that silence was broken only by the rippling of oars, and the hum of the flourishing village at the confluence of the Rivers."

The recorded wills and deeds of many immigrant Huguenots of South Carolina bear evidences of zeal for their Churches, and their poor, by bequests or conveyances of lands for such purposes.

Elias Horry, the emigrant, by his will devised a tract of land of about five hundred acres, for the purpose of establishing a free school in the Parish in which he resided. Somewhat later, Benjamin Faneuil erected and donated to the City of Boston, for public purposes, the Hall, which has become historical under the soubriquet of the "Cradle of Liberty."

The author of the Huguenots says: "Wherever the Huguenots settled they were among the most estimable citizens." Weiss adds: "The American Colonies were largely remunerated for the wisely generous hospitality, by the services which the exiles rendered them." And the first writer, assigns a reason, which is so just as to commend itself to all impartial minds: "They were not adventurers in search of wealth, they were not men who fled their native country after having lost fortune and reputation; but high hearts, fervent in zeal for religion, and resolved never to surrender their consciences to the imperious calls of Government or the vengeance of monarchs."

The brief allusion made to the simple piety, and to the interest in education, and the promotion of the public good, are but intended as illustrations of the characteristics of the Huguenots, and which impressed them for the common weal, upon all the communities in which they were intermingled.

But in addition to these, there was one characteristic which was destined to bear very abundant and lasting fruit upon American soil. The very determination, born of their religion, to resist all attempt to restrain or coerce their religious worship, or subject their consciences to subjection, wrought in the Huguenot mind a true knowledge of a great political liberty, and as they asserted this political liberty at La Rochelle and Montauban, so they carried it with them wheresoever they went, and especially brought it to the Colonies of North America. Here while asserting no peculiar rights or privileges, they were steadfast and unbending in the claim to an equal participation in the fullest degree with all other colonists of whatever nationality or creed. This claim, made while the wars of Louis XIV were so greatly disturbing the peace of Europe, and inflaming the national prejudices of the other Provincial settlers, was yet so just, and so addressed itself to the English Government, as well as to the Colonists themselves, that eventually it resulted in their being accorded the very fullest participation in every right, franchise, privilege or advantage enjoyed by every other class of Colonists. And the inflexible patriotism with which, in all the English and French, Spanish or Indian wars conducted in North America, the Huguenot descendant, embraced and supported the Government of England, fully vindicated that Government in the wisdom of its course to them. While the almost universal adoption of the patriot side in the war of the Revolution, told in strongest terms of the true conception of political liberty with which the Huguenot exile had been imbued by his religious teachings, and had brought with him, to be practiced when occasion should require.

It would be a theme of deep interest to dwell upon the influences which the Huguenot descendants exerted, in assisting their fellow colonists to work out the problem of the republican government, which the revolutionary war has created as a great palladium for human liberty, upon all mankind. But time admonishes that I can but briefly state a few facts, as evincing this. "Three men, Presidents of the



old Congress which conducted the United States through the revolutionary war, were descendants of French Protestant refugees. Henry Laurens of South Carolina. John Jay of New York. Elias Boudinot of New Jersey." The first Chief Justice of the State of New York, and the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, was John Jay. In nothing was the character of Gen. Francis Marion, more illustrious, than in his noble stand at the Jacksonborough Assembly in South Carolina in 1781, when he resisted the sequestration laws against the Tories of that State: a resistance made when a price was set by the British upon his own head; when he was hunted with unsparing malignity as the Swamp Fox, whom to destroy was an act of most laudable warfare; when his own property was lying so devastated, that not a building was standing, nor a bushel of food was grown, and when the troops which he commanded had been so hounded and peeled, as had been done to his ancestors by Louis XIV, that they did not have a sufficiency of clothing to be able to appear on parade, for very decency sake. Gabriel Manigault above the age of 75 years and incapable of bearing arms, had placed the whole of his fortune, over \$200,000, at the command of his State, and when in 1779 Prevost invaded South Carolina, and appeared before the lines of Charleston, this aged patriot not only shouldered his own musket and repaired to the trenches, but took in his hand with him his little grandson, Joseph Manigault, a lad of 14, to offer their lives if necessary, for the maintenance of their country's liberties.

Wherever commerce is known throughout the civilized world the eminent services of Mathew Fontaine Maury, a Huguenot descendant, is recognized in the Signal service, holding out to those who go down to the deep, the warning of danger, and foretelling from whence it threatens. In him, the Huguenot influence, is felt not alone in his own America, but throughout the nations of the earth.

He is said to be a benefactor of the whole Human family, who will cause an ear of corn to grow, where else it was sterile, and in his scientific development of the phosphate



rocks so long buried and unknown for useful purposes in the earth, St. Julien Ravenel, has given untold millions to rise up and call him blessed.

In manufactures, arts, sciences, education, religious earnestness and toleration, in laws, and in the steadfast perseverance for the promotion of civil and political liberty, the Huguenot descendant has so impressed himself upon the world, and especially upon the United States, that we are not only justified in claiming it for that people that they have exercised a most potent influence, but to fill us this evening with gratitude that under the dark cloud which overshadowed him in his flight, we are now able to see the bright silver lining, and be grateful to Him who led him forth, with characteristics so grand, so simple, so elevating.

We have listened with deepest interest to the eloquent language in which we have been told by the eminent author of the rise of the Huguenots, of men and women so courageous and brave; and to Dr. Henry M. Baird, not only we of Huguenot descent, but all who love their country, and their country's good, all who delight in seeing the good which is in human nature brought into light, are indebted in a great debt of gratitude.

As representing the Huguenot Society of South Carolina, I ask permission, not only, cordially to second the resolutions already offered, but in asking their adoption to ask the adoption of that which I will now read :

*Resolved*, "That the warm thanks of this assembly and of the Huguenot Society of America are hereby tendered to Professor Henry M. Baird, D. D., for the very able, learned and striking address, to which we have just listened, and that a copy be requested for publication by the Society."

Dr. Baird: In the name of the Huguenot descendants of South Carolina, permit me to offer and pray your acceptance of this unassuming little floral bouquet. It presents to the eye, no gay exhibition of colors, nor would it attract especial attention at an horticultural exhibition. But as the virtues, worth and qualities, which characterized the Huguenot,

were modest, and unassuming, exerting their quiet, but gentle and determined influences among those with whom they commingled, from the intrinsic value of the qualities, and not from any show. So this little bouquet grown and gathered in our sunny land, may be considered as typical of our forefathers' noble qualities. Scatter these little blossoms among your papers, and day after day and week after week, you will find the delicate perfume permeating all your papers, and quietly imparting that fragrance, so touchingly told by Ireland's gifted poet son :

“Like the vase in which roses have once been distilled,  
You may break, you may shatter the vase, if you will,  
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.”

In this little tribute, we desire to exhibit to you, personally, our thanks for the noble language in which you have told us of noble men, the Huguenots. Your words have deeply impressed upon us the truth of the beautiful thought so aptly expressed by a favorite son of New England :

“Lives of great men all remind us,  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us,  
Footprints on the sands of time ;  
Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main ;  
A forlorn, despondent brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.”



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